

MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO for Warning

Dick —

I believe Community Polish and Soviet analysts are falling behind the curve of developments in Polish-Soviet relations. Their failure to monitor trend lines since the Warsaw Pact summit in early December has caused them to miss the significance of Jaruzelski's appointment as prime minister, the Kania-Brezhnev by-play at the Soviet Party Congress, the early return home of Kania and Jaruzelski, and Ogarkov's flight to Poland the next day.

In view of the Administration's need to make further decisions on handling the Polish debt, trends in Polish-Soviet relations obviously will have major implications. We could record a modest analytic success if an evaluation of signs of strain could be prepared. Neither OPA nor INR has ventured an assessment of the pattern of events since 9 February, and there would be formidable problems in coordinating a NID article.

Perhaps Bob Gates could consider drafting [redacted] however tentative, alerting the White House to signs of trouble between Warsaw and Moscow.

I offer the attached as an attempt to pull the bits and pieces together.

Date 2 March 81 [redacted]

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Polish-Soviet relations appear to have entered a period of considerable strain.

Although both Kania and Brezhnev have an interest in avoiding open polemics, mutual resentments and suspicions are likely to have significant effects on Polish and Soviet policies and on party and state relations.

These tensions first surfaced in the divergent assessments expressed by Kania and Brezhnev at the Soviet Party Congress last week. Whereas Kania reiterated the formulation endorsed by Brezhnev last October and again at the Warsaw Pact summit meeting on 5 December—that the Polish party "will be able to overcome present difficulties"—Brezhnev conspicuously omitted this judgment and emphasized instead that the USSR "will not abandon fraternal socialist Poland in its hour of need." The early return to Warsaw on 26 February of Kania and Prime Minister Jaruzelski suggests that they encountered harsh criticism and pressure in private meetings with the Soviet leaders, and perhaps with the Czechoslovaks and East Germans. Soviet Chief of Staff Ogarkov's flight to Poland the following day probably was also related to these indications of strained relations.

Polish-Soviet tensions probably have been caused by the circumstances surrounding Kania's nomination of Minister of Defense Jaruzelski as prime minister at the Polish Central Committee meeting on 9 February. This appears to have been a maneuver by Kania to preempt an attempt by the conservative faction led by Politburo members Olszowski and Grabski to force a change in party policy in dealing with the Solidarity trade union and reformists within the party. The hardline faction, with Soviet support, was prepared to oust Kania and his moderate allies if he continued to resist demands for a change in policy.

In late January and early February, the conservative faction was pressing for a confrontation with Solidarity that would provide a pretext for arresting union militants and leaders of the Committee for Social Self-Defense (KOR). These pressures were a response to Kania's retreat in January from the commitment to

crack down on Solidarity that he was obliged to make at the Warsaw Pact summit in December. Kania's post-summit concessions to the workers movement and university students exhausted his credit with Moscow and placed him in serious jeopardy. By invoking the support of General Jaruzelski and the Polish Army, Kania outmaneuvered his party rivals and confronted Moscow with a fait accompli.

From Moscow's perspective, this unexpected turn of events was particularly disconcerting because the Soviets had intervened in the Polish party last September to arrange Kania's appointment as First Secretary. The Soviets apparently believed that Kania, because of his background as the senior party official responsible for internal security and his close contacts with the KGB, would be a reliable instrument of Soviet policy in coping with the Polish crisis. But Kania's pragmatic tactics in dealing with the realities of Solidarity's strength and widespread popular sentiment for major reforms surprised and disillusioned the Soviets.

Brezhnev probably feels personally betrayed because he had identified himself publicly with Kania's policies in October and had resisted strong pressures from within the Soviet leadership and from Czechoslovakia and East Germany at the Warsaw Pact summit to adopt a much more forceful policy for resolving the Polish crisis. There were thinly veiled signs of dissatisfaction within the Soviet leadership with Brezhnev's moderate stance at the summit meeting. In mid-January, however, Brezhnev yielded to this pressure and began to disengage from his support for Kania. By the end of January, he had thrown the weight of the Soviet party behind Kania's rivals in the Polish Politburo.

Kania's defeat of the hardline faction has left the Soviets without a coherent policy. If they now attempt to settle accounts with Kania and Jaruzelski or persist in advocating the Polish hardliners' preferred policy, this would seriously aggravate present tensions. It could also provoke Polish defiance and move Kania toward a more assertive national Communism, on the Romanian or Yugoslav model, based on an accommodation with Solidarity and the Polish Catholic Church.